United Nations A/51/PV.18

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

18th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 2 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Domingo Siazon, Jr., Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

Mr. Siazon (Philippines): On behalf of my delegation, Sir, I take pleasure in extending to you our heartfelt felicitations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We in the Philippines and in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) derive special gratification from congratulating you, a citizen of an ASEAN country, on this great honour.

The Philippines pays tribute to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has led our Organization in the most difficult circumstances.

I must beg your indulgence, Mr. President, and that of our colleagues to speak briefly about recent events in my country, developments which we consider historic, opening a bright new chapter in the history of the Philippines. Exactly a month ago, on 2 September, the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which had waged a rebellion for more than a quarter of a century, signed an agreement ending the conflict in Mindanao and establishing a zone of peace and development in that island-region.

On 9 September, Professor Nur Misuari, leader of the MNLF, ran for and was elected to the office of Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, which is, by virtue of a plebiscite, composed of four provinces in which Muslim Filipinos are in the majority.

At the same time, in accordance with the 2 September agreement, the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development is being organized under the leadership of the MNLF to help promote peace and development in 14 provinces and nine cities in the southern Philippines. Thus has the Philippines opted for national reconciliation as the only true road to peace and development.

Here, I pay tribute and give thanks to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and to the OIC's Committee of Six on the Situation of the Muslims in the Southern Philippines, under the wise and vigorous leadership of Indonesia and with the especially active involvement of Libya, for guiding us along that road towards the goal which we have now achieved.

I mention this because I know that what is essentially a domestic development in the Philippines finds resonance in other places and in the world at large.

We all know only too well that conflicts arising from ethnic and cultural differences are not unique to the Philippines. But just as the Mindanao conflict was not unique, neither was the process of reconciliation that

96-86359 (E)

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ended it. We consider the settlement in Mindanao a reflection of the salutary trend towards peace and reconciliation in the world, as well as a modest contribution to it.

In South Africa, the racist abomination that was apartheid has been abolished, and a multiracial Government based on the rule of the majority and the rights of the minority has been put in place, lending new stability to southern Africa.

In the Middle East, nations in contention agreed to take the road of peace. Regrettably, recent events have shown that the road is still strewn with obstacles. We retain the faith that these obstacles are surmountable with good will and a firm conviction that peace must not be destroyed again in a land so revered by people of many faiths. Our most fervent prayers go to the leaders and nations involved that they may soon return to the path of mutual understanding, reconciliation, justice and peace, for both the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we can at least hope that the Dayton accords, as well as the 14 September and subsequent elections, will put behind us the singular horror of "ethnic cleansing" and lead to a situation where different ethnic groups can live once again in peace and tolerance.

In this hemisphere, the Government of Guatemala and armed dissidents have achieved an accord of security and justice.

In our own region of South-East Asia, we look forward to the completion of a new Constitution by Myanmar that will provide a place in the nation's political life for the nationalities that have for so long been in rebellion and for political groups of many persuasions.

Unfortunately, inter-ethnic conflicts in far too many places continue to inflict suffering on innocent people — notably, for example, in Rwanda and Burundi.

Around the world, simmering beneath the surface, are grievances arising from growing disparities in economic well-being and social status within States and nations. However, on a global scale, there is a clear trend towards reconciliation and tolerance. As it is within nations, so is it between nations. We may be witnessing a new era, one not only of relative peace but also of close cooperation in dealing with the global challenges of today.

The cold war has ended, and with it the deadly reality of armed confrontation between nuclear-armed blocs.

Even the old North-South economic divide is being subsumed in a new global trading regime and in regional economic arrangements, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, in which the interests of both developed and developing countries are taken into account. These developments in reconciliation and cooperation give us hope that mankind can find the will to work together in meeting the old and new challenges that confront the world as a whole.

I see six major challenges that are central to the future welfare and the very survival of mankind.

The first has to do with the surfeit of weapons that continues to plague the world, particularly the continued deployment and development of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, the expanding volume of the traffic in conventional arms and the continued production and persistent use of especially injurious devices of war.

The second lies in the potential for conflict over maritime jurisdictions and resources and the need for stable maritime regimes. Another is mankind's continuing assault on the environment, putting into question the sustainability of the world's development. Yet another challenge is the need to maintain the momentum of the liberalization of international trade while cushioning weaker nations and vulnerable sectors of society from its undesirable effects. The fifth challenge is the necessity of ensuring human welfare and dignity within the nation-State and within society. The sixth and last is the growing menace of organized criminal gangs purveying terror, deadly weapons, illicit drugs, indentured labour, and the bodies of our women and children across international borders.

We have made significant progress in the control of arms; but the world remains a dangerous place, and much work remains to be done. We have extended indefinitely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Many of us have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that the General Assembly adopted last month. But we should not stop there, for these are but steps on the road towards complete nuclear disarmament. We continue to call upon the nuclear-weapon States to take seriously their commitment under

Article VI of the NPT to negotiate in good faith the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Towards this end, the Philippines once more joins the call for the parties to the NPT to draw up an international convention prohibiting the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. As another step, we reiterate the call for the conclusion of an international convention against the production and stockpiling of fissile materials.

Sir, last December in Bangkok, your Prime Minister and my President, together with the Heads of Government of the eight other countries of South-East Asia, signed the South east Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. We urge the nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves to respect this Treaty's provisions by adhering to its protocol. Together with the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga), the Pelindaba Text of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, and that for Antarctica, the South-East Asian Treaty is a major step towards a southern hemisphere free of nuclear weapons. We support the political linkage among these nuclear-free zones, as was recently proposed.

Of particular concern to us is the unacceptably large number of innocent persons, including a disproportionate number of young children, killed or maimed by landmines. The Philippines has ratified the Convention and its Protocol restricting the use of excessively injurious weapons, landmines, booby traps and similar devices. We have joined the move towards a global ban on anti-personnel mines.

In this spirit, President Ramos while on a visit last December to Cambodia, a country ravaged by landmines, ordered the immediate destruction of the Claymore mines which were then still in the inventory of the armed forces of the Philippines. Compliance with the President's instructions has been completed.

Another potential threat to global and regional peace and security has been the developing scramble for jurisdiction, resources and strategic position in the world's oceans. This has been strongly evident in the situation in the South China Sea, which for the most part is surrounded by South-East Asian States.

Fortunately, the international community has had the collective wisdom to agree on a set of rules, primarily in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to govern the use of the sea. Not least, the Convention subjects maritime jurisdictions to the rule of law, defining the nature and limits of those jurisdictions and providing the legal framework for their establishment and for negotiating settlements where they overlap.

The world is threatened not only by weapons of war and by disputes over territory, but also by mankind's assault on the world's fragile environment. The Philippines is firmly committed to the protection of the environment within its national jurisdiction. Environmental protection is a vital consideration in the approval of major development projects. We shall conserve the ecological integrity of the Philippines exclusive economic zone as well as of its internal waters. As an archipelagic country whose exclusive economic zone extends to a portion of the South China Sea, the Philippines places particular importance on preserving the ecological integrity of that body of water, and would welcome the sharing of knowledge and experience gained from efforts to protect the environment in similar bodies of water elsewhere in the world.

A potential threat to the environment arises from the growing use of nuclear energy in the generation of electricity. This growth has been particularly rapid in East Asia, producing nuclear waste with corresponding rapidity. While nuclear power is relatively clean as a source of energy, accidents in the operation of nuclear plants and in the disposal of nuclear waste can cause devastation for the environment as well as for human lives. Equally damaging is the reckless manner in which decommissioned nuclear power plants and nuclear-powered vessels are discarded. It is time for the international community to address this burgeoning problem with the seriousness and urgency that it deserves. Last May, President Ramos proposed the possible organization of ASIATOM, an international body to look into this concern in East Asia and to devise measures to deal with it.

Along with the breakup of empires, the dissolution of hostile alliances, and the spread of the spirit of reconciliation within and between nations, one salutary global development in recent years has been the establishment of an international trading regime based on the increasingly free exchange of goods and services. This development was made possible by the embrace by nearly all the world of market forces as the most efficient way of creating wealth for the world's people.

The efficacy of this principle of international economic relations has been demonstrated in South-East

Asia, where countries have opened up their markets to one another, through the Free Trade Area of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, and to the world for the benefit of all. Next month the Philippines will have the honour of hosting the annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC), including an informal meeting of leaders of the 18 participating economies on the Pacific rim.

At that meeting, we will consolidate plans of individual APEC economies into a coherent Manila action plan for APEC that will free up and ease trade, and that will attain the target set for free trade by the year 2010 for the developed participants and by 2020 for the developing economies. The plan includes ways of engaging in economic and technical cooperation, particularly in order to help the less developed economies to adjust to the free-trade regime envisioned in APEC.

A few weeks after the APEC meeting, the first Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization, to be held in Singapore, will review the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements and seek to develop a work programme to sustain the momentum of global trade liberalization through further negotiations on specific sectors.

The Philippines is strongly committed to the opening up of its economy. In affirming this basic policy of our country, we must ask our economic partners, particularly the developed ones, to desist from circumventing their own commitments to a free international trading regime by providing subsidies to their uncompetitive sectors and by extending them protection in the guise of labour rights or environmental conservation. We must reject this kind of tactic.

We must also urge that the subject and object of development — human beings, their welfare and dignity — not be overlooked. We also believe that the status of women is central to both economic growth and human development. The Philippines therefore calls upon all of us to carry out effectively and in full the Platform of Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women and to devote adequate resources to make this possible.

In accordance with our convictions on the status and rights of women, validated at the Beijing conference, the Philippines has actively pressed for international action to combat those scourges that plague the human race: violence against women and trafficking in women and children. Because of the international dimension of these blights on the human condition, the United Nations and the international community must keep them high on the international agenda until the human race is freed of them. The Philippines and other countries similarly situated have a special concern for women migrant workers because of their peculiar vulnerability to violence and abuse.

The Philippines' stand on the rights of women and children rests on our people's deep conviction of the inherent sacredness of the rights of all human persons, families and communities everywhere on this planet — their rights to freedom, dignity, participation in their own governance and to development.

Our lives, our well-being and our rights are constantly threatened by the activities of transnational criminal gangs. Some of these gangs traffic in drugs. Some steal and smuggle cars. Some deal in the illicit buying and selling of arms. Others engage in terror for a variety of causes. Still others traffic in women, children, or people eager for work.

The Philippines is prepared to consider the draft convention proposed by Poland on measures to combat organized crime. We commend Poland for this timely initiative.

The United Nations is the keystone of mankind's efforts on behalf of disarmament, the rule of law in the world's oceans, the preservation of the Earth and its environment, economic and social development, the fight against organized crime, and the protection of human rights. Because of its central and growing importance in human affairs, the Philippines firmly believes that the United Nations must be constantly renewed and invigorated to enable it to respond to the challenges that face each generation.

The Philippines favours the enlargement of the Security Council's permanent membership through the addition of countries that are politically and economically able and willing to assume the responsibilities of such membership. At the same time, we believe in greater representation on the basis of equitable geographical distribution. The various innovative proposals now on the table deserve close examination. But the issue of membership cannot be considered in isolation; it has to be addressed in the context of reform of the Security Council — reform towards greater transparency and democracy of its working methods and reform towards a more balanced relationship with the General Assembly,

which must retain pre-eminence in the affairs of the United Nations.

However, no structural changes in the United Nations will be effective unless it is assured of the necessary flow of financial resources. Our Organization, no matter how much reform takes place, can function effectively only if it knows with reasonable certainty whether and when it can pay its staff and meet the other obligations arising from operations that, after all, are mandated, often unanimously, by the Member States themselves.

Simple mathematical calculations will demonstrate that the financial crisis of the United Nations cannot be eased unless we all comply with the financial obligations that we freely undertook. We must pay our dues in full, on time and without conditions. Specifically, the United Nations can rest on fairly stable financial foundations if all of us pay our contributions to the regular budget for each year by the end of January of that year.

The Philippines favours a revision of the scale of assessments for United Nations contributions so as to reflect current political and economic circumstances. However, logic and consistency dictate that similar adjustments be made in the shares of the countries affected in the capitalization of the international financial institutions, including the World Bank and regional development banks such as the Asian Development Bank.

The world's peace, stability and progress, and the welfare and dignity of its inhabitants, depend in large measure on the United Nations — not on the Secretary-General or the Secretariat alone. Although their role is crucial, they depend above all on us, the Member States, which, together with our peoples, make up the United Nations. We are the United Nations. Let us make it work.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Kenya, His Excellency The Honourable Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka.

Mr. Musyoka (Kenya): On behalf of the Government of Kenya, I should like to convey to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations and best wishes on your unanimous election as President of this session of the Assembly. Your election to this high office is a fitting testimony to Malaysia's commitment to, and support for, the United Nations. Your country has been an ardent champion of the cause of developing countries. I am confident that your sterling qualities and versatile diplomatic capabilities will steer this Organization to greater heights.

I also wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who presided over the last session with great skill and dedication.

In the same vein, allow me to reiterate my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for the able manner in which he has borne the mantle of this Organization. We wish to commend him for his achievements during the last five years, despite the many obstacles that the Organization has faced.

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Since its inception, the General Assembly has provided Member States with the opportunity to exchange views on issues of common concern to the international community, with a view to securing a stable and peaceful world. To this end, I wish to assure you, Sir, of Kenya's commitment and determination to work together with other Member States in order to realize the Organization's ideals and objectives. We believe that the success of the United Nations depends on the collective resolve of its Members.

The international community still faces a number of conflicts that are of great concern, as they continue to undermine international peace and security. We are painfully reminded by history that good and evil coexist, and that without societal restraints, humanity is in eternal danger. As we approach the twenty-first century, and with the cold war behind us, the international community now faces numerous new and complex challenges posed by globalization, fragmentation, democratization and marginalization. There is a need to redesign the international order to meet these challenges. In this regard, we welcome the recent initiatives by the Organization to strengthen its conflict-prevention mechanisms and to promote preventive diplomacy and confidence-building measures.

The scourge of armed conflicts in certain parts of Africa constitutes one of the most urgent socio-political problems facing the continent, resulting in a serious threat to security, social cohesion and economic progress. These conflicts have posed serious challenges primarily due to the complexities associated with their internal character. Inter- and intra-State conflicts have led to a multitude of problems, including loss of life, destruction of property, poverty, ethnic tensions and underdevelopment in the countries where they occur.

These conflicts have been compounded by natural calamities resulting in a large number of refugees and displaced persons. We wish to reiterate our call to the international community to increase its support in alleviating the suffering of these people.

Since the inception of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, we have witnessed no less than 20 full-fledged civil wars on the African continent. Over the years, some of these wars have been resolved, while others have intensified. We are pleased that peace has been achieved in most parts of Africa. Sadly, however, there are still some intractable conflicts going on, notably in Burundi, the Sudan, Somalia and Liberia.

The conflict in Burundi, with its accompanying ethnic character, is of great concern to Kenya and the countries of the subregion. The recent *coup d'etat* in that country, which overthrew a constitutionally established Government, has compounded the political crisis. It negates the efforts of the OAU to bring to an end the era of military coups which have bedevilled the continent and remains an obstacle to Africa's quest for peace and stability.

In their efforts to find a lasting political settlement, the countries of the subregion — Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire and Kenya — held a series of meetings culminating in the imposition of sanctions against that sisterly country. These sanctions are aimed at putting pressure on the new regime to restore a democratically elected Assembly, unban political parties and enter into unconditional negotiations with all parties to the conflict.

While we welcome the recent Security Council resolution on Burundi, we appeal to the Council to take more decisive steps to ensure that the leaders in Burundi comply with the peace initiative of the second regional summit on Burundi held in Arusha. In this regard, my delegation wishes to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of Julius Nyerere, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who continues to facilitate the peace process in Burundi. We take this opportunity to urge the international community to render support to these measures and initiatives.

The situation in Somalia continues to be worrisome. The prolonged nature of this conflict, with its accompanying negative effects on the neighbouring countries, remains a matter of great concern to my country. It is now time for the international community to bring pressure to bear on the Somali faction leaders to come to the negotiating table and reach agreement that will, once and for all, relieve the agony and suffering of the Somali people. Kenya will continue to provide its cooperation and support.

With respect to the search for a durable peace in the Sudan, Kenya, as the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) subcommittee on the peace initiative on Sudan, is working together with the other member States to find appropriate remedies to the conflict. While there are no easy solutions to this conflict, the countries of the region, which remain seized of the matter, are hopeful that, through preventive diplomacy, there will soon be an end to the atrocities and that peace will be restored in the Sudan as well.

I wish to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my Government for the confidence the OAU has bestowed upon my country by endorsing Kenya as the sole candidate for the non-permanent seat in the Security Council allocated to Africa for the period 1997-1998 at the elections to be held later this year. The election of Kenya to the Council will provide us with the opportunity to contribute even further to the continued search for international peace and security.

The maintenance of international peace and security is a collective responsibility of us all. It was with this in mind that the General Assembly at its fiftieth session urged the Conference on Disarmament to conclude the negotiations for a comprehensive and truly verifiable treaty banning all nuclear testing. It was also with this understanding and expectation that Kenya and other African countries affirmed their commitment to outlawing nuclear testing and the possession of nuclear weapons on the African continent. Towards this end, the Pelindaba Treaty was signed in Cairo on 11 April 1996, declaring Africa a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. We commend similar efforts that have been undertaken to declare other regions nuclear-free zones.

Kenya reaffirms its commitment to total nuclear disarmament. There is no longer any justification for the possession of nuclear weapons nor for their testing. We must work towards the achievement of the goal of complete elimination of all nuclear weapons within a given time-frame. Kenya therefore welcomes the recent conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as an important step in this direction.

The United Nations has a critical role to play in consensus- building in international economic cooperation. Kenya is confident that the Organization will continue to

uphold its principles of universality, sovereignty and multilateralism in its decisions and operational activities. We are of the view that the United Nations should be strengthened in order effectively to carry out its mandate and follow-up on the programmes of action that have been agreed upon at the various international conferences. The continuum of global conferences in recent years has enabled us to create a new vision of cooperation towards global development needs. Indeed, the most recent of these, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), which took place in Istanbul, Turkey, endorsed the need for quick action in addressing the dual objectives of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements. To realize these objectives, the Conference called for new and additional resources and for the strengthening of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements in order for it effectively to carry out its mandate. In this context, Kenya believes that, for this to become a reality, international commitment is imperative.

We also view the World Food Summit to be held in Rome this year as a major United Nations conference that will address itself to the primary needs of mankind by ensuring food security and sustainable development. We expect the international community to render appropriate support in order to realize these objectives.

While most developing countries continue in their strenuous economic reform efforts, the question of the debt burden and debt servicing remains a major obstacle. Kenya calls for an early consensus on debt relief, reduction and possible cancellation. It is expected that the Bretton Woods institutions will quickly conclude their consultations on the steps to be taken to address the debt problem of developing countries. These should include additional innovative measures that would provide social safety nets to vulnerable groups, particularly children, women and the poor.

My own country, Kenya, under the leadership of President Daniel arap Moi, has undertaken far-reaching political and economic reforms. These reforms have been undertaken at painful costs and with adverse effects on the population. However, after suffering a decline in economic growth as a result of the stringent reform measures, our economy is now on the path of recovery and has registered a growth rate of between 5 and 6 per cent this year. The Kenyan economy is now totally liberalized. All foreign exchange restrictions have been abolished, making Kenya one of the most attractive investment destinations anywhere in the world. In order to achieve higher growth and to maintain the development momentum, Kenya appeals for the continued commitment, understanding and support of our development partners.

We are also committed to regional integration and the widening of economic space, designed to integrate national economies into formal groupings, centring on trading blocs. The inauguration of the East African Cooperation in Arusha early this year by the three Heads of State of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, marks an important milestone in our efforts towards political and socio-economic integration. This arrangement, which brings together a population of over 70 million people, has created vast opportunities for investment in our subregion. It also constitutes an important building block towards the realization of the African economic community.

We have also recently revitalized IGADD and expanded its mandate to focus on issues of development and conflict prevention, management and resolution. The revitalized IGADD will require full support from our development partners for a speedy implementation of the regional initiatives. In the wider subregion, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa continues to be the main vehicle for regional integration in eastern and southern Africa.

Kenya's greatest asset is its environment. The herds of wildlife which migrate through the plains, the mysterious forests, the snow-peaked mountains, the ancient lakes and the extraordinary landscapes of the Great Rift Valley have attracted generations of visitors and have become to many a symbol of the beauty and purity of the African continent. Throughout the world, space is being taken up for development purposes by expanding populations. Inappropriate land practices run counter to the conservation of natural resources. Precious species are becoming either endangered or indeed extinct.

In Kenya, our policies have been designed to preserve the environment as a common heritage for mankind. We have resisted all pressures against conservation and have created a sanctuary for a great variety of biodiversity in all its grandeur. Furthermore, the Government of Kenya has recently initiated major innovative steps that will ensure the protection of the ecosystem for the enjoyment of future generations. These include public awareness, environmental education, and, most importantly, the Great Rift Valley Conservancy Programme, which will ensure integrated utilization of land. We wish to appeal to the international community to make available the necessary resources to augment

such efforts, in order to realize the objective of sustainable development as called for in Agenda 21.

In the face of the complex nature of emerging problems in the world today, the demands on the United Nations continue to increase as Member States expect more and more from it. The pressures of facilitating conflict resolution and peacekeeping, promoting sustainable development and combating social problems associated with poverty, disease and famine, have made the demands even more urgent.

We therefore welcome efforts to reform the United Nations so that it can serve the interests of Member States more effectively. However, as the United Nations continues in its reform endeavours, the General Assembly must be given greater visibility and authority. The Security Council must be reformed to reflect the principles of democracy, transparency and equitable representation. My delegation wishes to urge Member States to exercise greater flexibility on the various innovative positions with regard to reform of the Security Council in order to reach an early consensus. Similarly, in undertaking financial reforms, bold and practical measures are necessary to ensure adequate and predictable resources. The obligation of Member States to pay their assessed contributions for the regular and peacekeeping budgets, in full, on time and without conditions, cannot be overemphasized.

We wish to underscore that reform cannot be an end in itself but must be seen as a necessary tool for enabling the Organization to achieve its objectives in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

We welcome the recent arrangements to establish Nairobi as the location of one of the four United Nations Centres — the only one in the whole of the developing world. We regret, however, that the two United Nations programmes with their Headquarters in Nairobi continue to suffer from lack of adequate funding and capacity underutilization, despite their enormous potential.

The recent tendency to locate environment-related secretariats away from Nairobi has had a negative effect on the strengthening of the Centre and should be discouraged. We are convinced that institutional linkage is a vital component for the enhancement of efficiency and capacity-utilization of the limited resources. In this respect, Kenya wishes to record its appreciation to the Secretary-General for holding the meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination in Nairobi in April 1996 — a first for the developing world. We in Africa were particularly proud to host that high-level meeting, which took place immediately after the Secretary-General launched the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa.

Finally, we wish to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for initiating far-reaching reforms within the United Nations system since his assumption of the high office of chief executive of the Organization. My delegation wishes to express its satisfaction at his untiring efforts to steer the Organization to greater heights as we move into the next century.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Farouk Al-Shara'.

Mr. Al-Shara' (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my pleasure to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, and to congratulate his friendly country, Malaysia, on his election to that high international post. We are confident that his political experience and diplomatic skill will lead to the success of this session's deliberations. May I also extend our thanks to his predecessor for conducting the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

On this occasion, we should like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations, and our concern that his international standing, and his mandate under the Charter be respected. We also believe that the common interest of Member States requires the support of his candidature for a second term.

We live in a region which, because of the injustice, occupation and aggression it has witnessed for decades, has had more than its share of victims of wars and violence. It was impossible to envisage a solution to end such tragedies and to respond to the aspirations of the peoples of the region as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict continued to prevail in the absence of a just and comprehensive peace.

Many people do not know how many international endeavours were made, how many meetings were convened, how many parties contributed, how many letters were sent and assurances given before agreement was reached between the parties on the foundations and rules that made up the terms of reference of the Madrid

Peace Conference. It is now five years since the Madrid Conference was convened and, in turn, bilateral negotiations set up. Those negotiations survived various periods of tension, interruption, set-back — and progress. They generated thousands of pages of records. Both Syria and Israel agreed on Israel's withdrawal from the Golan back to the boundary of 4 June 1967. Negotiations then proceeded to the other elements of peace — all under the supervision of the United States of America, and with its participation.

Now, after all those international efforts, which were unprecedented in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, a new Government has taken office in Israel. It has set itself the opposite course to that of its predecessor, and has declared "no" three times: no to withdrawal from the Golan; no to withdrawal from occupied Palestinian lands; and no to a Palestinian State.

To anyone who has followed the declarations and practices of the Israeli Government since it assumed power, it is clear that it has not wasted a single opportunity to underline its insistence on changing the foundations and rules of the peace process, to attempt to demolish all the achievements of the past five years and to call for a return to negotiations from square one, without preconditions — in other words, without the Madrid terms of reference, in accordance with the "peace for peace" formula, with the objective of imposing its *fait accompli* on the Arabs.

President Hafez Al-Assad has said:

> "If this is what the Israeli Prime Minister has in mind, why should Syria want peace? If peace does not return the land to its rightful owners, why should we call for it? Can any thinking person in this world expect Syria to establish peace with the Israeli Government while Syrian land remains in Israeli hands? That is why I say that if Netanyahu stays that course, I do not believe there is any window for a just and comprehensive peace in the region."

One of the dilemmas facing the Middle East peace process is that certain Israeli leaders are encouraging, rather than discouraging, extremism in Israeli society. They are the ones who add fuel to the fire whenever a better climate for the achievement of peace begins to develop. There are many examples of such an attitude, which we do not have time to provide today. It is sufficient to recall that in the aftermath of the Hebron massacre voices were raised everywhere, even in Israel itself, calling for the Jewish settlers, who number less than 400, to move from the heart of Hebron, which is home to more than 120,000 Palestinians. However, the Israeli Government refused to withdraw from Hebron, portraying such a move as the ultimate painful concession.

The bloody confrontations that broke out following the opening of the tunnel that Israel dug under the wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as previous deliberate Israeli provocations and the unjustified escalation of tensions against Syria and Lebanon over the past few weeks, all confirm that the Israeli Government did not take office in order to resume peace negotiations on the basis of international legitimacy, the Madrid terms of reference and the "land-for-peace" formula, but rather in order to launch new negotiations with no terms of reference, entrenching a *fait accompli*.

During his European tour, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that his decision to open the tunnel was designed merely to ease the movement of tourists and spare them a walk of a few dozen extra metres. Imagine how guilty those tourists would feel if they believed that, in order to secure their comfort, the Israeli authorities killed about 80 Palestinians, caused the deaths of 15 Israelis, and wounded more than a thousand people. They would not, of course, believe it; we do not believe it — and neither does the head of the Israeli Government, who revealed his true expansionist intentions when he later claimed that the tunnel had been there for two thousand years, and arrogantly declared that it would remain open for ever.

Perhaps the huge number of innocent victims who fell in Jerusalem and in the towns of the West Bank and Gaza have hastened the unmasking of such deceit. In this way the Israeli Government appears to public opinion as it truly is: neither desirous of a just peace nor keen to pursue it. This was reflected in the statements made by many Foreign Ministers in the Security Council, where Israel appeared totally isolated, besieged on all sides by statements deploring and denouncing its action, with the voices that usually volunteer to defend it dying away.

The Israeli Government's fuelling of extremism did not stop there. General Sharon, the Israeli Minister for Infrastructure, issued a decision last week allocating three new sites on the occupied Syrian Golan for building 600 housing units. Perhaps a large segment of international public opinion and some politicians are not aware that without the financial aid and huge governmental subsidies given to Jewish settlers, they would not settle in the Golan, especially as they are well aware that the Golan is

Syrian territory, which they will have to leave sooner or later.

Given my comments, it might be concluded that the Israeli Government has no strategy for peace but has, it seems, chosen the path of confrontation. The path of confrontation, however, is very costly for several reasons. First, Israel can start a war whenever it chooses, but cannot end it when it chooses. Israel might wreak considerable destruction here and there, but it can never destroy the will of a nation that has deep roots of civilization which spread all over the world. Many Israelis may be unaware that all the wars they have fought between October 1973 and April 1996 have gained them nothing except human and political losses and further international condemnation.

Secondly, the path of confrontation is very costly because the international community rejects war and aggression and calls for the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Israel knows that the Arabs have opted for peace as their strategic option, including at the summit level. In taking this stand they have been supported by the summit of the States of the Non-Aligned Movement, the summit of the European Union and the summit of the Group of Seven industrial countries, all of which have stressed the need to adhere to the foundations of the peace process, relevant Security Council resolutions and the "land-for-peace" formula, as well as respect by the parties for the agreements and commitments reached so far.

Given these facts, it would be unacceptable if peace were not also a strategic option for Israel — indeed, it would be a real catastrophe. The achievement of a just and comprehensive peace, to which the peoples of the region and the world aspire, requires Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab land, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

Syria reaffirms its attachment to the unity of both the territory and the people of Iraq. Syria rejects any attempt to violate the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq's territory or to interfere in its internal affairs, including the attempt to establish a so-called security zone in northern Iraq. Syria also calls for an end to the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people, and for a continuation of the implementation of Security Council resolutions, including a solution to the issue of Kuwaiti detainees.

With regard to the Lockerbie crisis, Syria expresses its concern for the human and material harm that has been done to the brotherly people of Libya as a result of the continuing coercive measures imposed on them by the Security Council. Syria reaffirms the statement made in the final declaration on the issue of the recent Arab summit, and calls for a response to the initiative submitted by the Arab League for solving this crisis.

Syria hopes that the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran can find a peaceful solution to the crisis over the three islands in a way that will preserve good-neighbourly relations and contribute to the strengthening of security and stability in the region.

Syria expresses its support for the principles agreed upon by the Governments of Yemen and Eritrea for a solution to their conflict through international arbitration. Our position flows from our desire for good-neighbourly relations between them and our belief in the importance of re-establishing security and stability in the Red Sea region.

Syria also expresses its concern at the continuing deterioration of the situation in Somalia and reiterates the call of the Arab summit to the leaders of the Somali factions to achieve national reconciliation and to work towards the establishment of a national authority representing our brothers, the Somali people, as a whole.

With regard to Korea, Syria expresses its support for measures that would guarantee peace and stability in the Korean peninsula and for the aspirations of the Korean people to reunification.

The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations provided an important opportunity for us to forge a common vision of the future of international relations. On that occasion, we said that the crisis facing the United Nations does not arise from the purposes and principles of the Charter, but rather from the United Nations decision-making mechanism and the selective way in which decisions are implemented. We also observed that the Organization's serious financial crisis is, in fact, merely the reflection of a political crisis that essentially revolves around the identity of the United Nations and its role in the post-cold-war era.

In the light of those comments, the obvious question is: Will it be possible to introduce meaningful reforms into the structure of the United Nations that are acceptable and satisfactory to Member States? That is the true challenge, requiring that we all strive to strengthen dialogue and international cooperation. This will ensure

that reforms take place which fulfil, in substance and in form, the aspirations of Member States.

Today, as we stand on the threshold of the next century, we are all faced with serious challenges that require us to create an environment that will allow future generations to live in peace, security and cooperation within a system of international relations free from violence and confrontation. That is the hope of our peoples. This is what we must endeavour to achieve as we look forward to a better future, one both more just and more humane that will benefit all mankind.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Mr. Georgi Pirinski.

Mr. Pirinksi (Bulgaria): A year ago this month, the General Assembly adopted by acclamation the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations. Thus, the special commemorative session of the Assembly, attended by 128 Heads of State and Government, solemnly reaffirmed our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter. As Ambassador Butler of Australia, the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, stated, that Declaration must serve as a set of guidelines for cooperation amongst all nations in the years ahead.

The fiftieth session, so ably presided over by Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, took the initial step towards translating these new guidelines into practical action aimed at the twenty-first century. In congratulating Mr. Razali Ismail upon his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, I wish him every success in his highly responsible mission to carry further the new tasks and endeavours of the Organization in the course of this session.

Last year's Declaration spelt out four main areas for action in fulfilment of the mission of the United Nations in the coming decades: peace, development, equality and justice. The world of the twenty-first century will confront two great opposing forces: globalization and fragmentation. Bulgaria, as an active member of the international community, has felt both the new opportunities and the new risks. In developing its policies and responses, Bulgaria has proceeded on the basis of its European identity, particularly its association with and prospective membership of the European Union. I would therefore like to state that we share in and attach importance to the European Union memorandum to this session and to the statement delivered by Mr. Dick Spring on behalf of the Union.

With the transition from the post-war bipolar system to a world of multi-centrism, the regional format will acquire ever-growing importance. This has been our experience in the Balkans, at least, a region which has sustained the full blast of the forces of both globalization and disastrous fragmentation.

In line with its consistently maintained positions, Bulgaria welcomed from the outset the Dayton and Paris agreements. We provided observers as well as police personnel to the international missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The recent elections in that country, notwithstanding their deficiencies and problems, represent a vitally important step forward. They opened the way for yesterday's welcome and important Security Council resolution to lift the sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia.

At the same time, even during the active phase of the conflict, we have worked for the promotion of the positive trends of good-neighbourliness throughout the region. At last year's fiftieth session, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria highlighted this priority feature of Bulgaria's foreign policy, favouring comprehensive regional cooperation. In particular he stated our intention to convene a meeting of Central and South-East European States in order to examine a broad range of issues concerning long-term stability, security and cooperation throughout the region.

Today, it is my pleasure to inform the Assembly that such a meeting took place in Sofia on 6 and 7 July 1996 at foreign ministerial level. At that meeting, seven countries — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia — adopted a comprehensive document, the Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans.

The President returned to the Chair.

The text of the Declaration was duly circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Declaration was fully supported by all participants in the broader format of the Sofia ministerial meeting, including representatives from Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Hungary, and the five Contact Group countries — Germany, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America; Ireland, which holds the presidency of the European Union; representatives of countries chairing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Central European Initiative, Black Sea

Economic Cooperation; and high-level representatives from the United Nations, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, was also present, took part in the meeting and made a valuable contribution to its success.

I should like to outline very briefly the main spheres of activity launched at the meeting in Sofia in July. In the first area — enhancing regional peace and stability, and building confidence and good-neighbourliness — the point of departure was for the countries in the region to reaffirm their allegiance to the fundamental principles of inter-State relations as spelt out by the Charter, as well as in Helsinki and Paris.

In line with these principles, Bulgaria has been actively promoting confidence-building with all its neighbours and has already concluded agreements to this effect with Turkey, Greece and Romania. We stand ready to enter into such agreements with our other neighbours, as well as on a multilateral regional basis.

Another important step in this direction will be the convening in Sofia of a meeting of Ministers of Defence as provided for in the Declaration of the Balkan countries. This meeting should contribute significantly towards strengthening security, enhancing confidence and considering future arms-control measures in the region.

Recent regional multilateral cooperation in South-East Europe has focused on infrastructure development and upgrading as important factors for economic growth and regional stability. There is an emerging consensus that it should be oriented towards upgrading and linking local infrastructures with trans-European ones, as well as with those in other adjacent areas — the eastern Mediterranean, northern Africa and across the Black Sea and into Asia. Transport infrastructure development is the subject of local cooperation between Albania, the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria, with direct financial and technical assistance being provided by the United States of America; a quadrilateral agreement has recently been signed with regard to this matter. It is also the subject of trilateral cooperation between Greece, Bulgaria and Romania. An important contribution to the cause of good-neighbourliness and infrastructure development are the Bulgarian-Greek cross-border cooperation and water-sharing agreements, which recently entered into force and will be submitted to the OSCE under the Pact on Stability in Europe.

Furthermore, in accordance with the agreement between the Balkan countries, the Bulgarian Government began preliminary consultations towards setting up a transregional information and contacts centre for infrastructure development. We expect further contributions to be made to the positive developments in this field from the forthcoming meeting of Ministers of Transportation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Central European Initiative partner countries in Sofia in November 1996.

Together with its neighbours in South-East Europe, Bulgaria is building regional cooperation on the basis of the rule of law and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those of persons belonging to different national, ethnic, religious and cultural minorities. The countries from the region once again reaffirmed their commitment to these principles and values. They also adopted specific guidelines in the various areas of cultural contacts and cooperation through exchanges and joint programmes. These should add to existing bilateral or multilateral programmes that promote better mutual understanding and the overcoming of negative stereotypes inherited from the past.

Joint action in the field of crime prevention and the elimination of international terrorism envisages closer cooperation between central, regional and border authorities through efficient communications and exchange of information; a commitment to accede to all relevant international conventions that prevent and punish international crime and terrorism; joining and participation in specialized regional forums for discussing the problems of illicit drug-trafficking, organized crime and regional anti-terrorist cooperation; and the elaboration of a regional programme to combat organized crime. This already represents a tangible contribution to the implementation at the regional level of a zero-tolerance approach to terrorism.

The Sofia Declaration thus set out both the framework and the terms of reference for comprehensive regional cooperation. To this end, follow-up activities are being elaborated in all areas and we hope that all States from the region will take part at the next ministerial meeting in Greece in 1997.

Proposals on cooperation in South-East Europe have also come from outside the region. The Florence conference of the Peace Implementation Council last June identified the three initiatives fostering such cooperation: the Balkan conference initiated by the Bulgarian

Government, the stability process under the terms of the Royaumont declaration of 12 December 1995 and the South-East Europe cooperation initiative of the United States Government. There is important potential for interaction between the three initiatives, with the process launched in Sofia serving as a comprehensive basis which could link up with the other two initiatives in specific areas of common interest.

This regional endeavour represents an integral building block in the development of an all-European system of security and cooperation. We expect the Lisbon OSCE summit in December 1996 to address in a comprehensive manner this set of issues and provide guidelines for future action at both the European and regional levels. Various bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch and other bodies could also be highly effective in encouraging and promoting at the regional level the ideas and initiatives that I have outlined.

I would like to state Bulgaria's position on some United Nations-led and other major endeavours at the global level. We fully share the view that the recent conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is an achievement of truly historic proportions. In pursuit of Bulgaria's long-standing policies in favour of nuclear arms control and disarmament, I had the honour to sign this Treaty on the very first day it was opened for signature. For Bulgaria, a convention on the ban on the production of fissionable material for military purposes would be the next logical stage in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, in which Bulgaria is an active participant.

From the point of view of global as well as regional security, another priority task is the early entry into force and implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. As for the Biological Weapons Convention, Bulgaria is fully in favour of upgrading its control and verification mechanism and is ready to contribute to this end at the forthcoming Review Conference and thereafter.

Bulgaria took an active part in the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its Protocol II. During the negotiations, we made special efforts to take into consideration the new technical requirements on mines as an absolute prerequisite for the purposes of mine-clearance and the normal conduct of United Nations peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Furthermore, by a decision taken on 2 May 1996, the Bulgarian Government imposed a three-year ban on exports of anti-personnel mines. Bulgaria, which currently hold the chairmanship of the Commission on Sustainable Development, attaches particular importance, together with the other United Nations Member States, to the special session of the General Assembly on the review of the follow-up process to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

In October 1995, Sofia hosted the third Ministerial Conference on Environment for Europe. The Conference provided further impetus to the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe. The ministerial declaration adopted is an important document in the field of environmental protection in Europe and a further step towards implementing the global concept of sustainability.

In recent years, we have witnessed rapid changes in the world economy, changes that can be described by the general trends of liberalization and globalization, both of which are important factors for development. I am happy to inform this Assembly that, after long years of strenuous negotiations, today, 2 October 1996, Bulgaria is becoming a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). By joining WTO, Bulgaria shall become fully integrated into the world trading system which is essential for us to be able to achieve stable economic growth.

Bearing in mind the new challenges in the social and economic areas in today's multipolar and interdependent world, my country supports the efforts of the international community to enhance and streamline United Nations activities in this field.

Bulgaria is a party to all major international human-rights instruments. We believe that international cooperation in the field of human rights is essential for their implementation. It should be conducted in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, such as the sovereign equality, political independence and the territorial integrity of States. We are in favour of constructive and open dialogue on even sensitive issues related to human rights in individual States. This approach is not directed against any country. The situations in different parts of the world should be examined in a way that takes into account the specific characteristics of individual countries in a

comprehensive context and be aimed above all at encouraging positive developments and tendencies.

Transnational crime and international terrorism are increasingly emerging, as stated by many speakers in this forum, as one of the major security challenges facing the international community today. They directly affect development and quality of life and erode the very foundations of democratic society. It has become more than obvious that these challenges cannot be addressed effectively by national institutions alone. Today, there is a pressing need to develop new cooperation in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. Such cooperation could also include more information sharing, including inputs from intelligence sources.

At this session, the General Assembly must carefully examine all valuable ideas and proposals in this field put forward by preceding speakers. My country will readily support the efforts of the international community aimed at the elaboration, on a global level, of efficient measures to combat crime and to eliminate international terrorism.

Allow me to digress for a moment from the prepared text of my speech in order to share with the Assembly a most regrettable and tragic piece of news concerning a political assassination which took place just over 24 hours ago in Sofia. The target was a former Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Mr. Andrei Lukanov. I would like to inform the Assembly that Mr. Lukanov was one of the principal and personal driving forces behind the democratic changes that took place in Bulgaria after 1989. He staked his personal efforts and future on the successful introduction into Bulgarian society of the values of democracy, the promotion of human rights and economic reform. He was also well-known within the United Nations family, in particular in Geneva, having been an active promoter of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development since its early years and having promoted Bulgaria's participation in the world trading system and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. In an ironic twist of fate, today marks, as I said, Bulgaria's accession to WTO.

The Bulgarian Parliament adopted a declaration on this occasion several hours ago. It firmly declares the will of all political forces in Bulgaria — Mr. Lukanov having been an active member of Parliament for the last seven years — not to permit this act in any way to divert Bulgaria from the path towards economic and political reform or to infringe on the peaceful and lawful process of political and public life, including the forthcoming presidential elections at the end of this month.

I have instructed my Mission to transmit the text of this declaration, with a short covering note, to you, Mr. President, the Secretary-General and Member States. I invite all of you to share our feelings of support and sympathy for the family of Mr. Lukanov and to send messages of support to the Bulgarian Parliament. I invite the Assembly, at this point in time, without rising, to share a minute of silence in remembrance of Mr. Lukanov.

Improvements in the effectiveness and functioning of the principal organs, a better balance in their authority and the streamlining of the subsidiary machinery are important conditions for the reform of the United Nations.

The issue of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council is a key component of this process. We share the view that some Member States — developed, for instance Germany and Japan, and developing alike — are able to assume the responsibility of permanent membership. A number of proposals for the reform of the Security Council have already been put on the table and should be examined with due attention. In this respect, I would like to mention the valuable ideas presented by Minister Lamberto Dini of Italy just a few days ago. One of the major developments over the past several years has been the fact that the number of States in the Eastern European Group has almost doubled. We reiterate our conviction that such a rise in membership requires one additional non-permanent seat to be allocated to this Group. Some Balkan countries have already indicated their willingness to apply for non-permanent membership in the Security Council. With its consistent regional policies of good-neighbourliness and cooperation in South-East Europe, as well as in the broader United Nations framework, Bulgaria is equally justified in seeking membership on the Council in the years to come.

It would be remiss of me, however, not to mention some serious flaws in the United Nations peacemaking machinery. The question of finding an adequate solution to the complicated problems arising for third countries as a result of United Nations Security Council-imposed sanctions is one of them. At its fiftieth session the General Assembly once again expressed concern at the persisting special economic problems confronting States affected by sanctions implementation. It also renewed its invitation to the international financial institutions to continue to pay special attention to these problems and their adverse social impact, and to consider ways and

means for mobilizing and providing resources on appropriate terms for mitigating the negative impact of the sanctions on those States. The Assembly also renewed its request to the competent organs, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations to take into consideration the special needs of the affected States and to consider providing assistance to them from their special programme resources.

Regrettably, few are the practical steps in implementing these recommendations. These problems, since they are long-lasting, will continue to exert their negative impact long after the lifting of sanctions. It would be highly counterproductive if the peacemaking essence of sanctions were to be distorted by major economic dislocation in affected third States. Being among the countries suffering most from the implementation of sanctions, at this session Bulgaria will again submit a draft resolution on the subject and I invite all Member States to give it their unanimous and firm support.

The proceedings of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly provide new, important opportunities to continue on the path of reform and increased efficiency. They open up new opportunities to render support to those trends in the modern world, our global village and each of its neighbourhoods, making for societies with greater security and promise in which our children can look forward to a more fulfilling life. Bulgaria is firmly committed to contributing actively and in a constructive spirit to the accomplishment of this new mission of the world Organization.

The President: I share in the shock and sorrow over the loss of a great Bulgarian leader and nationalist.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Manh Cam.

Mr. Nguyen Manh Cam (Viet Nam) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. I would like to congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We are truly proud that you, an experienced representative of Malaysia, a member country of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), have been elected to this important position. We are confident that, under your guidance, our session will achieve many fine results.

Let me take this opportunity to express our high appreciation of the performance of your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral. We also hold in high regard the dynamism and perseverance of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in the service of our common cause.

Last year at this time, we had the opportunity to take a retrospective look at the world's development over the past half-century and the role played by the United Nations in this long journey. One year later, the world landscape is still full of contrasts, interwoven with factors and trends of hope and with events and tendencies that give rise to the concerns of the international community at this end of the twentieth century.

In a world of teeming changes, what emerges as invariable are the legitimate aspiration and vigorous determination of nations to achieve peace and development based on equality, democracy, respect for the independence and sovereignty of each country and the identity of each nation. In this grand endeavour, peoples turn to the United Nations for timely support and fruitful assistance because the Organization, having waded through the vicissitudes of a half-century of history, has been daily affirming its crucial role for the world as a whole. Today's challenge for our world Organization is how to reform and adapt itself to the new international circumstances in order to meet the expectations of the peoples.

As the system of international relations in the post-cold-war era takes shape, we can already see its trend towards diversification and multicentrism. In this context, multilateral institutions and mechanisms, especially the United Nations, have assumed an ever-more essential role. However, there are various ways of interpreting the role of our Organization today. As regards the vast majority of the Member countries, the United Nations, in its capacity as a centre for harmonizing inter-State relations, should play a fundamental role in firmly defending international law and in encouraging States' strict and consistent respect for and observation of the United Nations Charter. In this spirit, the United Nations must use its weight and responsibility to stem the practices — such as coercion and imposition, arbitrary embargo and sanctions that bring suffering to innocent people, and flagrant interference in the internal affairs of States, in violation of their independence and sovereignty — that run counter to the current general trends.

To play its role adequately, the United Nations must reform itself so as to increase the representativeness of its institutional organs and to democratize and ensure greater

transparency in our Organization's working procedures and methods. The cornerstones of the democratization of the United Nations system are the reform of the Security Council and the enhancement of the role of the General Assembly. This is a complex and difficult task which requires utmost perseverance. The expansion of the composition of the Security Council and the democratization of its decision-making procedures constitute an urgent demand of the international community. At the same time, the authority and role of the General Assembly, the broadest and most representative body, must be strengthened in response to the legitimate appeal of us all. Certainly, the reform must be undertaken on the basis of the agreed principles, particularly that of consensus, reflecting to the fullest extent the views and aspirations of the majority of the member countries and ensuring the interests of the different regions.

If in today's world democracy in a society means the active participation of its citizens, democracy in international relations requires the active participation of all countries, large or small, rich or poor. Only an increasingly democratized United Nations can enjoy the prestige and confidence necessary for playing its role in harmonizing the actions of States on the basis of international law, as all desire it to. Let us build upon the momentum gathered at the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations so that on entering the twenty-first century, the United Nations can truly serve as an example of democratization in the world's political life.

The wise way to achieve the common objectives of national independence, peace and development is that of cooperation in the spirit of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit. The globalization of the world economy, the liberalization of trade and investment and the dizzying advances of science and technology now present every State with both unprecedented opportunities and imposing challenges. It is no mere coincidence that the recent summit of the seven major industrialized countries, the G-7, in Lyons, focused on the theme of globalization.

However, the developing countries, and especially the underdeveloped ones, are approaching this trial that is so vital for their development and prosperity poorly equipped and in extremely difficult conditions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the international community and in particular the developed countries, to give the required attention and adequate assistance to help solve this crucial equation, because it is impossible to accept, in the context of interdependence, a world in which affluence is concentrated in a small number of countries while the majority of countries continue to struggle against increasing poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor grows inexorably wider.

Given its strength and prestige, the United Nations is able to and needs to play a useful role in this process. In implementing the Agenda for Development, our Organization should concentrate first on the regions in difficulty and on the essential issues. With its financial resources and groups of experts, the United Nations system can assist the countries of the South to overcome their disadvantaged position and succeed in their efforts for timely regional and global integration, in the context of an economic, trade, scientific and technological race on a global scale.

In Viet Nam, for instance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is carrying out projects to assist us in our integration into the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). UNDP is also playing an active and effective role to facilitate the establishment of a framework for cooperation among the countries along the Mekong. UNDP is currently working on a national capacity-building project so that Viet Nam can be prepared to participate more effectively in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the near future. Such practical bilateral and multilateral development projects are to be welcomed.

However, we are now facing a glaring paradox: the need for international cooperation for development continues to grow, while the available means become ever more scarce and natural resources more depleted. In the fierce competition for development, States must concentrate their resources on domestic needs in order to restructure their economies and solve the pressing social problems, thus enhancing their internal strength. That is quite understandable.

Nevertheless, in the current context of increasing interdependence among States, international cooperation, especially the flow of capital and technology transfer from the developed to the developing countries is indispensable, and it is also necessary and beneficial for the sustainable development of the developed countries themselves. Moreover, today, when urgent global issues are strengthening links between all States, a danger to one nation may also affect others, and the stability and prosperity enjoyed by one society may contribute to an environment favourable for the stability and prosperity of other societies.

Hunger, illness, social injustice and other phenomena are all potential threats to the security of each country and the stability of the world as a whole. Allocating of resources to support the development of developing countries and contributing in various ways to bilateral and multilateral international cooperation for development are wise investments for peace and for the shared future of all of our societies.

The United Nations is not immune to this discrepancy between resources and the needs for development assistance. Today, the resources available to the United Nations are not increasing; on the contrary, they are shrinking or being overextended. This worrisome situation calls for the attention and responsibility of all Member States, especially of the major Powers and developed countries that possess greater resources and potential. The measure to be taken immediately, in the unanimous view of Member States, is for every State to fulfil its financial obligations. Moreover, all initiatives to provide supplementary resources for the United Nations should be encouraged. Recently, scholars and renowned personalities have advanced numerous interesting proposals in this regard. We are of the view that the General Assembly should assign the Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations and other relevant working groups the task of seriously studying these proposals in order to explore all possible ways of providing the United Nations with the resources necessary to actively assist in development for all — first and foremost, that of the underdeveloped countries.

The United Nations has a rather weighty responsibility regarding the demands of development. Its role in the globalization process is therefore no less crucial. Since the beginning of this decade the United Nations has initiated and organized a number of world summit conferences on a set of global issues ranging from environment to social development, from population to human rights, from women to children — and coming up we have the World Food Summit, the aim of which is to find and implement coordinated measures at all levels — national, regional, and international — to solve problems of importance for the future of all nations.

If in the resolution of crisis and conflicts the participation of the majority of countries is somewhat limited or even indirect, through an intermediary mechanism, in the resolution of the global issues for development the United Nations has been able to mobilize the direct participation of all countries, big and small, rich and poor, developed and developing, because these are not just "to whom it may concern" issues. In this manner, the United Nations can succeed in its efforts to emerge from a mere reactive role to crises and conflicts and play a proactive role in preventing such conflicts and crises. Clearly, the resolution of global issues is always broadly democratic in nature.

For all these reasons, we hold that the United Nations should further strengthen its role of assistance and coordination in this essential field and continue to advance the implementation of programmes of action already adopted. It is evident that no organization can replace the United Nations in this vital role. In fulfilling this role, the United Nations will see its prestige enhanced and its image brought closer to the life of each nation and each human being.

The year 1996 will go down in the history of Viet Nam as the beginning of a new stage of development of our country. Last June, the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam was successfully concluded. The special significance of this historic event is that, based on the successes achieved over the last 10 years of renewal, reform and national revival, the Congress decided to lead the country into a new phase of industrialization and modernization, with a view to doubling by the year 2000 the 1990 per-capita gross domestic product and essentially transforming Viet Nam into an industrialized country in the next 20 to 25 years.

At the same time, we have reaffirmed the pursuit of our foreign policy of independence and sovereignty, openness, the diversification and multilateralism of our international relations, and regional and international integration. It is because of this direction that the foreign policy of Viet Nam has achieved and continues to achieve outstanding results, assisting in the work of nation-building and development in a practical way, and effectively contributing to the resolution of international problems.

Viet Nam has established diplomatic relations with over 160 countries, including all the major Powers and the most prominent world political-economic centres. Viet Nam has commercial relations with more than 100 countries and investment ties with over 50 countries and territories. In addition to expanding its relations with countries of all continents, last year as a full member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, one of the most dynamic and successful of regional organizations, Viet Nam actively contributed to regional and world cooperation and development.

We are participating more actively in the work of international organizations, especially those of the United Nations system, as well regional organizations. This year, Viet Nam begins its term as a member of the UNICEF Executive Board, and will present its candidature for a seat on the Economic and Social Council at this session of the General Assembly. We hope to receive the support of Member countries of the United Nations to be able to contribute our share to the work of that important body, developing and coordinating policies of economic and social development and cooperation. We are currently preparing for the successful organization of the upcoming seventh Francophone summit to be held in November 1997 at Hanoi. As regards broader integration, Viet Nam is also actively preparing to participate soon in other international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.

As a new member of the Conference on Disarmament, Viet Nam played an active part in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which it recently signed. By signing that Treaty, Vietnam joined in the broad appeal of the international community that all States refrain from all nuclear testing, regardless of the form, strictly observe the ban on all nuclear-tests and undertake concrete steps and measures towards the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. Viet Nam stands ready to cooperate with all countries for the effective implementation of the Treaty, contributing to a cleaner environment, to greater confidence and to consolidation of international security, aimed at a more secure and healthy world. At the same time, we hold that the verification activities of the Treaty implementation process must be carried out in a fair and impartial manner, with strict respect for the sovereignty of States. In this spirit, we view that the proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted recently at the Conference on Disarmament by 28 States, including Viet Nam, deserves serious consideration.

To achieve the objective and sincere desire to build a Viet Nam with a prosperous people, a strong nation and a just and civilized society, we are determined to bring into full play the achievements of the reform and renewal process and equip ourselves with the internal strength needed to move forward steadily on the path of integration. On the basis of our current international relations, we will strengthen our cooperation with other countries and international and regional organizations; we will enhance productivity; we will consolidate the peaceful environment and create international conditions still more favourable, in the service of the prosperity of our nation as well as for the prosperity of the region and the world.

At the threshold of the third millennium, all nation-States are subject to strong pressures of both opportunity and challenge. The vast ability of mankind in this age, together with the extraordinary advances in science and technology, offers us hope for development and prosperity for all nations. Yet the poverty that afflicts more than one fifth of the world population and the gap between the rich and the poor raise concerns. The opportunities seem great but the challenges are acutely felt. To begin the twenty-first century with more hope than anxiety, it will be important for us first to enhance our sense of responsibility and broaden our overall long-term interests: those of peace and development. There is no doubt that the United Nations, the Organization to which we all belong, will contribute actively towards achieving that end.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus (His Excellency Mr. Uladzimir Syanko).

Mr. Syanko (Belarus): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

General debates over a number of years have already clearly indicated that virtually all Member States consider it of vital importance to transform the United Nations into an Organization with enhanced potential in the service of peace and security in the world.

Belarus advocates a pragmatic approach to the reform of the United Nations based on a realistic assessment of the Organization's ability to enhance the practical efficiency of the entire United Nations system along the strategic lines of its activities. One of these is peacemaking, which in the aftermath of the cold war acquired new substance and quality.

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The New Testament reads,

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God." *(Matthew, 5:9)*

Today's efforts by the United Nations to maintain peace are noble indeed. Belarus supports actions to further perfect peacekeeping operations as an important practical instrument at the disposal of the United Nations.

A crystal-clear understanding of peacekeeping operations as a specific means used in conflict settlement, aimed at maintaining peace rather than imposing it and at preventing highly explosive situations from emerging, is a sure guarantee that such operations will be successfully implemented.

We note with satisfaction a substantive breakthrough in the peaceful settlement of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Belarus emphasizes the key significance of restoring close economic, scientific and cultural ties between the States of the region for the normalization of the situation in the Balkans. That is why we support the idea of making the decision of lifting the economic and trade embargo against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia a permanent one.

Belarus attaches great significance to the process of a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, based on respect for the right of all States of the region to live in peace within internationally recognized borders.

As regards the ways and means to further perfect the Security Council's activities, Belarus would like to emphasize the principle of balanced representation for all regional groups of Member States, in particular the Eastern European group, in a renewed and expanded Security Council.

Given their particular significance, concerted international efforts in the field of disarmament are required in shaping the global security system that would befit the twenty-first century. We consider it a great privilege and honour that our practical actions and initiatives in this domain have been recognized and supported through the election of a representative of Belarus to the post of Chairman of the First Committee at the current session.

This year has been marked by momentous events in Belarus. Very shortly the last nuclear missile will leave the territory of our Republic, thus making the entire territory of Central Europe, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This brings into particular prominence the initiative put forward by Alyaksandr Lukashenka, President of Belarus, to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

Efforts aimed at setting up and consolidating nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world are gaining momentum. Hence, we consider it illogical for Europe to remain the only continent where no practical steps have been taken in this direction. We strongly believe that setting up a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe would further enhance the spirit of trust, mutual respect and partnership in that part of the European continent and would serve as a solid contribution by the European nations to nuclear non-proliferation.

In the search for an efficient arms control regime, the delegation of Belarus intends to initiate further consideration at this session of the General Assembly of the item on prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons. Ecologically safe destruction of weapons, conversion of military enterprises, legal aspects of the transfer of sensitive advanced technology and of their impact on the development of science and technology stand high on the list of our priorities.

From this lofty rostrum I am proud to say that, despite the formidable economic, social and financial constraints we have had to overcome, Belarus has completely fulfilled all its obligations under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Equally significant is the fact that Belarus submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in July 1996 its ratification instruments on joining the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Located in the geographical centre of Europe, my country has set itself the goal of preventing dangerous tensions from evolving in the region which, more often than any other part of the planet, has been a seat of world wars, in order to help prevent the emergence of new lines of separation, curtains, walls and other constructions that seemed gone for ever.

From that perspective, we must bring to the Assembly's attention the concern of the Belarusian people regarding the eventual rapid expansion of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the deployment of its military infrastructure in close proximity to our borders. It is worth noting that a considerable part of the population of Belarus no longer considers NATO a hostile organization. Yet, being realistic, we must admit that much more time is needed to transform that attitude into a sympathetic stance. It would be appropriate to expect that such large and drastic transformations in the European security system to evolve gradually.

In these new circumstances, the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

(OSCE) acquires new significance. In all confidence, we pin our hopes on the forthcoming OSCE summit in Lisbon. The results of the summit, I am convinced, will prove to be a solid basis for enhancing coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE, as well as for better distributing between them the functions of ensuring regional security in Europe in order to help create a comprehensive security model for Europe in the twenty-first century and to further the efforts towards concerted actions by European States aimed at strengthening stability on the continent.

Globalization of the world economy made it possible for the States to considerably expand their markets, as well as the flow of goods, services, finance and technologies, to adjust economic relations and to improve the economic and social well-being of their populations. At the same time, the removal of trade and other economic barriers exposed the vulnerability of countries with less-developed economies. Many of those countries find it difficult to keep pace with the rapid transformations now under way and to break the vicious circle of backward development.

That is why the countries with economies in transition, Belarus included, have every reason to expect that special measures will be taken by the United Nations in order to facilitate their integration into the world economic and trade systems and to help them join existing and emerging multilateral economic institutions and mechanisms.

We reiterate our intention to host an international conference on the sustainable development of countries with economies in transition, to be convened in Minsk in May 1997. I am convinced that the results of the conference will prove a valuable contribution to the five-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21, at the special session of the General Assembly next June.

The activities of the United Nations in the social and environmental fields have a particular significance for Belarus. The problems in these areas are extremely acute due to the negative impact of a number of factors that emerged in the course of complex economic transformations. The leadership of Belarus is undertaking considerable efforts to improve the quality of life of its citizens. At the same time, we are not always able to resolve acute social problems by our own means alone. Decisions adopted at six world summits, held in Rio de Janeiro, Vienna, Copenhagen, Beijing, Cairo and Istanbul, have prompted the needed and long-overdue adoption of a global programme of assistance to the countries that have embarked on the road of market reforms.

The problem of refugees, displaced persons and repatriates is also very acute today. Our Republic welcomes the results of the Geneva regional conference on refugees, displaced persons, other forms of forced movements and repatriates in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). I believe that the establishment, under the aegis of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, of a permanent regional centre on migratory problems and refugees for the countries of Eastern Europe could make a considerable contribution to the process of complete and effective implementation of those decisions. We propose that such a centre be headquartered in Minsk.

Taking urgent measures to combat terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime is yet another demand of the moment. Proceeding from this premise, we welcome the initiative announced from this rostrum by Poland to introduce a draft United Nations framework convention against organized crime.

Our Republic does not possess nuclear energy, but more than any other State in the world it is interested in the implementation of effective preventive measures in the field of nuclear safety that would make it impossible for new Chernobyls to occur in the future. Belarus is in favour of the comprehensive strengthening of the nuclear-safety regime, including development and adoption of the appropriate international convention with concrete and strong commitments under international control. The initiative to establish a global fund for environmental protection deserves most serious consideration. My country is grateful to the United Nations for its valuable efforts in coordinating, initiating and discussing Chernobyl-related issues. This is extremely important to us. At the same time Belarus is deeply concerned over the fact that, alongside the ongoing discussion related to the closure of the Chernobyl reactor, the problem of mitigating the medical and environmental after-effects of the Chernobyl catastrophe — the main burden of which has been borne by our young State — are being pushed aside.

We are deeply concerned over the financial situation of the Organization. Admitting that Belarus now finds itself among the States with the biggest debts to the United Nations, we cannot but underscore that this situation has emerged as a result of objective financial and economic difficulties experienced by Belarus at this complex stage of its development, as well as of the unjust distribution of United Nations expenses among the Member States. Excessive rates of assessment for the United Nations regular budget and for peacekeeping

operations has now resulted in one of the founding States of the United Nations being unable, for objective reasons, to fulfil its financial obligations to the Organization. In view of this, we support all-round measures aimed at reforming the entire financial system of the United Nations and the search for fair forms of financial cooperation between the Organization and the Member States, in particular those whose arrears have accumulated due to a number of reasons beyond their control.

Finally, the wide-scale reforming of the United Nations system coincides with the democratic transformations taking place in a number of States, Belarus being one of them. Given that the reforms now under way are of immediate concern to each and every citizen of our country, we are fully aware of their significance at this crucial juncture in the development of international relations. Comprehension of the importance of that factor enabled Belarus to secure public law and order, stability and peace in its territory. Yet sometimes it is not so easy for the major political actors to achieve a coordinated approach to tackling the intricate problems facing Belarus at this transitional juncture in its history. Thus, it has become of vital importance today to find an efficient balance between the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches of power and to ensure their stable interaction. This is precisely the purpose of the upcoming popular referendum in Belarus, which is being held at the initiative of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations has also breathed new life into its ideals and strengthened our belief that the United Nations is a unique and genuinely integral part of international life. I am convinced that the fifty-first session of the General Assembly can and must become a starting point for effectively reforming the United Nations, which will be possible only through the joint efforts of all Member States of the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luis Valencia Rodríguez, Chairman of the delegation of Ecuador.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to extend to President Razali Ismail Ecuador's warm congratulations on his election, which is a tribute to his valuable contributions to the work of our world Organization in his capacity as Permanent Representative of Malaysia. I wish also to convey our thanks to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, for the fruitful work he accomplished.

I wish to express to the delegation of Bulgaria the heartfelt condolences of the Government of Ecuador for the irreparable loss it has suffered with the killing of former Prime Minister Lukanov. Our condolences go also to the family and friends of that eminent man.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, we remain immersed in a process of profound change on the international scene, resulting from the end of the ideological confrontation between East and West. We are seeing the emergence of new opportunities for peace-building, for the strengthening of development, for the diffusion of democracy and for stepped-up international cooperation, especially politically. Ecuador believes that we should take maximum advantage of these positive factors and use them as a basis on which to devise the most ambitious programme possible for the coming years, with the goal of a world of equity and justice, a world in which future generations can live well, in secure conditions, at peace with themselves and with the environment on which their very survival depends.

In these circumstances, the essential objective of our Organization, as established in the Charter, remains the same: the maintenance of international peace and security. To attain this objective, it is imperative that all Member States reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter. Most fundamentally, this means banning the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or the political independence of any State, as well as the obligation to settle international disputes exclusively by peaceful means. The larger goal of international security should be seen as embracing the political, economic and social conditions in which all nations develop.

While the danger of worldwide nuclear destruction has receded, Ecuador continues to maintain that preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons is not an end in itself, but an intermediate step towards the ultimate objective of totally banning and completely destroying all nuclear weapons. Ecuador regrets that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to adopt by consensus the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It takes the view, however, that the text supported by most States, which has been endorsed by the General Assembly and opened for signature by States, is an important step towards that objective. Ecuador has signed that instrument. Although it is not the ideal instrument for which the Conference on Disarmament was striving, it would be a mistake to start this long and arduous process all over again. Ecuador will also continue to work for

general and complete disarmament, which will eliminate once and for all the grave danger inherent in weapons of mass destruction and end the squandering of scarce national resources on weapons.

Ecuador voted in favour of resolution 49/75 K, by which the General Assembly requested the International Court of Justice to issue an Advisory Opinion as to whether international law authorizes the threat or use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances. We welcome the Court's unanimous finding that

> "There is in neither customary nor conventional international law any specific authorization of the threat or use of nuclear weapons."

The finding also states that

> "A threat or use of force by means of nuclear weapons that is contrary to Article 2, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Charter and that fails to meet all the requirements of Article 51, is unlawful."

In its finding, the Court also expresses the view that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

The Government of Ecuador believes that the General Assembly should endorse these views, which form a basis for the continued work of the international community to bring about the definitive banning of nuclear weapons.

Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; organized international crime; and the production, consumption and trafficking of all illicit drugs continue to pose grave threats that undermine international stability and the security and well-being of society in general. To eradicate these evils, we need a coordinated and persistent international effort in which all States should be involved, in accordance with their capacity and with their degree of responsibility. In this regard, Ecuador is complying appropriately with its obligations.

We are currently experiencing the rapid globalization and interdependence of the world economy, which requires the adoption of rational domestic policies and a favourable international economic environment. At present, the promotion of economic development is reflected in the liberalization of trade agreements and the establishment of an open multilateral commercial system. This new state of affairs has favourable effects; however, in certain circumstances, it produces adverse consequences. For that reason it is imperative that policies and the international environment be structured so as to derive maximum benefit from these trends and minimize the negative effects. Ecuador is mindful of this situation, but would also like to stress the need, as expressed by the Heads of State and Government in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, to

> "Invigorate the dialogue and partnership between all countries in order to secure the existence of a favourable political and economic environment for the promotion of international cooperation for development based on the imperatives of mutual benefit and interest and genuine interdependence, while recognizing that each country is ultimately responsible for its own development". (*resolution 50/6, para. 8*)

In this regard, direct foreign investment in developing countries is particular important because it accelerates the economic process to the benefit of both the investors and of the recipient economies.

The United Nations should continue to be an important catalyst in support of the economic and social development of the developing countries and of the disadvantaged and marginalized sectors. The world Organization has sponsored global conferences to address vital problems related to the environment, population, social development, crime, the advancement of women, the protection of the family, human settlements, trade and development, and public administration. The recommendations and initiatives adopted at those conferences have set genuine priorities for the international community in the promotion of development. Nevertheless, what has been achieved to date in many of these fields is still uneven and insufficient. Therefore, Ecuador reaffirms that, in order to effectively implement these decisions, there needs to be a rapid mobilization of the resources for development, as well as a more efficient use of those resources. Without such an international commitment, all the conferences' recommendations and other similar pronouncements will only enlarge the overloaded archives of our foreign ministries. Given the persistence of such environmental problems as the lack of drinking water, threats to biological diversity, the depletion of the ozone layer, the warming of the atmosphere, the diminishing soil productivity, desertification and diminishing food security,

Governments of both industrialized and developing countries must take joint, concerted action.

Ecuador, faithful to its democratic traditions, has recently provided an example of a transparent electoral process and of respect for the popular will. As a result, President Abdalá Bucaram was elected to lead the country, and for the first time in Ecuadorian history, a woman, Mrs. Rosalía Arteaga, has been elected Vice-President of the Republic. The new Administration's first and principal actions are focused on social policies, especially on combating poverty and on a wide-ranging national programme of low-cost housing.

Given its faith in the will of the people, Ecuador welcomes the growing trend towards democratization: more and more countries have adopted multi-party systems, organized free and fair elections and begun to transform themselves into more open and participative societies. However, Ecuador also believes that this process does not happen spontaneously but requires the understanding and support of the international community so as to create and sustain conditions conducive to such changes. In other words, democracy and hunger are antithetical elements that cannot exist together.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action — which is steadily gaining practical force and effectiveness — reaffirm the solemn commitment of all States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The interrelationship between human rights, democracy and development articulated in that Declaration and Programme, calls for a comprehensive and global approach to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights.

In the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, the Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. They made a commitment, among other things, to protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms; to strengthen laws, policies and programmes to secure the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of political, civil, economic, social and cultural life; to promote and protect the rights of the child; to ensure protection of the rights of people who are particularly vulnerable, including young people, the disabled, the elderly and migrant workers; and to promote and protect the rights of indigenous populations. Ecuador considers that human rights has become one of the most important spheres of United Nations action. It supports the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in his efforts to carry out this broad and important programme of activities.

It should be recalled that economic and social problems are not restricted to the most disadvantaged countries. A number of societies are seriously threatened by increasing external debt, the instability of the international financial system, persistent unemployment, intractable poverty and increasingly destructive waves of crime and corruption. The inequality gap between developed and developing countries remains unacceptably large and continues to widen. More than 1 billion people lack drinking water, and 1.7 billion do not have access to proper health facilities. This means that poverty continues to affect more than one fifth of the world's population. Hunger, malnutrition, health problems, a total lack of housing, limited access to education and other public services and resources, social exclusion, alienation and violence are only a few of the many factors associated with poverty. The fight against this scourge is one of the greatest challenges that the United Nations and its specialized agencies must face in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole. Since 1990, commitments have been made and goals established, with a view to achieving the overall objective of eradicating poverty in partnership with all the actors associated with development. In this context, and from this lofty rostrum, Ecuador would like to issue an urgent appeal to all Member States to intensify international cooperation, in its many aspects, in order to fight vigorously together to ensure that these commitments and goals have practical and effective application. We must remember that poverty is not only a malady which destroys the societies directly affected, it is also a corrosive contagion that prevents international relations from developing on a basis of justice and equity.

Ecuador is a multi-ethnic country with sizeable and important indigenous groups and significant black minorities. For this reason, it considers that the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, declared by this General Assembly, establishes a programme of action that will restore the rights of those peoples, which have systematically been victims of a long historical process of exclusion and discrimination. We believe it is incumbent on the entire international community to build universal understanding of the fact that protecting those populations also means preserving the cultural heritage of humankind. Ecuador trusts that it can rely on international cooperation in order to

appropriately fulfil its obligation in this respect, in coordination with its national programmes.

The founders of the United Nations must have realized that they could not foresee exactly what the world would be like 50 years hence. On the other hand, they established basic objectives and principles and incorporated them in a Charter that is sufficiently flexible to enable the Organization to serve its peaceful objectives and to evolve in response to new challenges. This is why the Charter, and its purposes and principles, has endured. However, today's changed circumstances, which determine the functioning of the United Nations, demand a modification in the structure and the operational practices of our Organization. It is necessary, among other things, to increase the United Nations capacity to prevent conflicts through preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. We need better ways and means to respond to the challenges of emergency situations. And, along with all of this, it is essential to fully carry out the work of economic and social development. The General Assembly must be revitalized as the pre-eminent organ in which all Member States exercise on an equal footing their rights and duties as set forth in the Charter. Equitable representation in the Security Council must be assured, and its size must be in proportion with the number of Member States. It must cease being an elitist organ with antidemocratic privileges, and the efficiency and transparency of its work must be enhanced. The Economic and Social Council must regain its essential original functions as set out in the Charter: primarily, to promote well-being and to improve living standards for all the inhabitants of the Earth. The current financial crisis is seriously affecting the United Nations ability to fulfil the lofty objectives set forth in the Charter. The greatest debtors should set an example of their readiness to fulfil their obligations. Only if there is a general willingness to provide the United Nations with the resources it needs, as well as the necessary political support, will it be possible for the global Organization to live up to the trust and hopes that humankind has vested in it.

I wish to inform the General Assembly that since the last session, as regards the peacemaking process being carried out pursuant to the Itamaraty Declaration between Ecuador and Peru, and with the participation of the guarantor countries — Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States — several meetings have taken place at both the diplomatic and military levels. At these there has been significant progress, progress that my delegation regards as conducive to finalizing the procedures for discussions on the substance of the border dispute between the two countries. The Government of Ecuador will continue to work towards the achievement of the ultimate goal, which is no less than a fair, definitive and honourable solution to the problem.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Dioncounda Traore, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali and for Malians living abroad.

Mr. Traore (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me to begin by expressing, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Mali, heartfelt congratulations to the President on his election to lead the fifty-first regular session of the General Assembly. His election reflects the trust and esteem he enjoys in this Organization because of his great diplomatic skills and his vast experience of international relations. While this is an honour for him, it also honours his country, Malaysia, a friend of my country's and one that plays an important role in international affairs, particularly within the Non-Aligned Movement.

I am therefore convinced that the President will conduct the business of the fifty-first session in a competent and well-advised manner. He can certainly count on the support of the Republic of Mali to contribute to the success of his mission. Allow me also to thank his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the outstanding work he accomplished during his term of office. Finally, I should like, on behalf of my delegation, to pay well-deserved homage to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his courageous action and tireless efforts for peace and understanding among peoples.

The end of the cold war gave the peoples of the world cause to hope for the advent of a new era marked by the promotion of more stable and balanced international relations. To this end, the international community must mobilize to find just and lasting solutions to the many hotbeds of tension and conflict that jeopardize international peace and security.

In this respect, Mali welcomes the qualitative development of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We welcome the holding of elections on 14 September, which marked a decisive stage for the future of the country. We exhort the international community to work to preserve and consolidate this newly restored peace.

We likewise welcome the possibilities that arose at the latest Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) summit in Liberia for a settlement based on

national reconciliation and the restoration of democratically elected institutions. Mali has worked steadfastly to find a solution to the crisis in Liberia and is prepared to make available a battalion to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

Likewise, Mali supports the efforts undertaken by the international community to assist the people of Burundi to establish a lasting peace and national reconciliation. Mali also supports United Nations efforts to establish a just and lasting peace in Angola.

The international community must do everything possible in Somalia to help bring about reconciliation and the establishment of national institutions that are supported and trusted by all Somalis.

Recent developments on the question of Western Sahara require that our Organization work even more intensively towards the holding of a referendum, in keeping with the relevant resolutions adopted on the matter.

Mali has always reaffirmed its support for international law and is concerned at the continued sanctions imposed on Libya, which have compounded the sufferings of the Libyan people, with whom my country reiterates it solidarity.

Like other countries in the international community, Mali is seriously concerned over recent developments in the situation in the Middle East. My country remains convinced that in order to settle the Israeli-Arab conflict, there is no alternative to the possibilities offered by the Madrid Peace Conference. Mali therefore calls for the continuation of the peace process and for compliance with the commitments previously undertaken.

To promote more stable and balanced international relations, the present mechanisms for the consolidation of peace need to be strengthened; but we also need to find new tools. The Agenda for Peace opens new possibilities in this area.

Accordingly, Mali welcomed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a historic stage in the strengthening of general and complete disarmament. We likewise welcomed the adoption on 11 April 1996 of the Pelindaba Treaty, which made Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone. My country also hopes that further progress might be made to eliminate anti-personnel mines.

Mali has demonstrated its commitment to strengthening the process of general and complete disarmament through specific national and international initiatives. Accordingly, in 1994, the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, requested and obtained special assistance from the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish a consultative mission responsible for studying ways and means to stem the proliferation of small arms in the Sahelo-Saharan region. Indeed, our countries, which are not arms producers, have become lucrative markets for the war industry. Where did these weapons come from? What are their transit points? An answer to these questions, in my delegation's view, would make it possible to find ways and means to guarantee that the people of the affected countries enjoy a safe environment conducive to pursuing development.

Besides the support of other countries in the Sahelo-Saharan region, Mali's initiative was also backed by other regions during the forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions of the General Assembly, namely through the adoption of resolutions 49/75 G and 50/70 H. Mali's initiative helped give rise to our Organization's now-famous concept of micro-disarmament, which seeks to draw the attention of the international community to the disastrous consequences of small weapons, particularly in the developing countries, where they are used mostly to fuel conflicts.

A better-structured and more united international order seems today to be the very precondition for international peace and security. Development is one of the major challenges that our Organization must meet today. As Pope Paul VI has stressed,

"Development is another word for peace."

Thus, in order to establish the basis for a lasting peace, the problems of poverty, destitution and social marginalization must therefore be given priority at the United Nations.

I should like in this respect to stress the great importance Mali attaches to the drafting of an Agenda for Development, the indispensable counterpart to the Agenda for Peace. This entails the organization of international cooperation for development on a new basis, an area in which my country is working with resolve. The role of the United Nations system in the development process also must be strengthened.

In this connection, the Agenda for Development — which my delegation hopes will be adopted at this session of the General Assembly — will make it possible to refocus the world's attention on cooperation for development, particularly by encouraging new, more complete and more effective approaches to development. It could also provide a way to strengthen coordination within the United Nations system, particularly by recognizing the Organization as a network of institutions responsible for the economic and social development of the Member States.

In this respect, because of the persistent foreign-debt crisis of the countries of the South and the dwindling of official development assistance, the question of development financing requires special attention.

The Agenda for Development should likewise take into account the recommendations contained in the Plans of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro; the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo; the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen; the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing; and the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held in Istanbul.

The Agenda for Development clearly must give special attention to Africa. The socio-economic situation of our continent is indeed of great concern. Africa, which is confronting all kinds of epidemic and endemic diseases — including malaria and AIDS — has only one doctor for every 18,000 people, as compared to one doctor for fewer than 400 people in developed countries. More than 80 million school-age African children do not have access to primary or secondary education. More than one third of Africa's population suffers from famine, and more than 23 million children are malnourished. Finally, Africa is reeling from an external debt that in 1995 was estimated to be $322 billion, the debt servicing of which absorbs more than one third of its export earnings.

Given this situation, in an increasingly interdependent world, the international community must show solidarity with Africa. That is why a solidarity pact between Africa and the rest of the international community was sealed with the adoption of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. As we know, under the terms of this New Agenda, Africa solemnly reaffirms that Africans themselves are primarily responsible for the economic and social development of the continent, while the international community undertakes to support Africa's efforts in attaining its development objectives.

Commendable efforts have been made by African countries in implementing this New Agenda. In the political and economic spheres, in particular, these have been achieved by consolidating the democratic process, by promoting investments and by taking account of environmental and population problems in development policies. Mali has thus established a policy for economic recovery and improved public financing. Macro-economic goals, on the whole, have been attained.

A broad range of structural measures has been implemented through price liberalization; privatization; the elimination or restructuring of many public enterprises; and the reform of the agricultural sector, with a view to reducing costs and to increasing and diversifying production. These tangible results enabled Mali in February 1996 to conclude a new three-year agreement for the period 1996-1998 in the framework of the Reinforced Structural Adjustment Facility.

Mindful of the need to accompany the promotion of economic growth with resolute efforts in the social domain to improve significantly the living standards of peoples and to reduce poverty permanently, my Government has expanded social services. In addition, priority in socio-economic development programmes has been given to women.

Since 26 March 1991, Mali has continued its steady progress towards consolidating its regained peace and building a State based on the rule of law. The qualitative developments that have taken place in Mali's northern regions show clearly the determination of Mali's young democracy to tackle and resolve all problems in a concerted and peaceful way, with the active participation of all players and with scrupulous respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The organization of the "Flame of Peace" ceremony was an eloquent illustration of this. It was a symbolic ceremony to destroy the stockpiles of several thousand weapons that were surrendered by ex-combatants of the Mouvement et Fronts Unis de l'Azawad and the Mouvement Patriotique Malien Ganda Koy. It took place on 27 March 1996 in Timbuktu under the presidency of the Head of State of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, and in the presence of the President of the Republic of Ghana, the current President of ECOWAS and several ministerial delegations of Mali's neighbouring countries. The United Nations, which contributed to the peace efforts through the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme as well

as to the small-arms collection process, was also represented by an important delegation.

During that ceremony the Mouvement et Fronts Unis de l'Azawad and the Mouvement Patriotique Malien Ganda Koy issued a joint declaration under which they

> "solemnly and irreversibly proclaim the dissolution of their respective movements and fronts".

These positive developments in northern Mali mean that real prospects now exist for integration and socio-economic development in the region. We therefore appeal to the international community to support the efforts of the Government of Mali to consolidate democracy in the country; to continue to strengthen the peace that has been established with the participation of the country's various communities; and to show its solidarity concretely, by providing the necessary humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of returning refugees and to help promote their reintegration.

It is thus important to undertake urgent work to develop the regions concerned by, *inter alia*, reintegrating displaced peoples, restoring our administration, boosting agricultural production and improving the functioning of public services, in particular in the areas of education, health and justice.

I take this opportunity to urgently appeal to Mali's development partners quickly and effectively to implement this programme, which, in the long run, aims at development within a State based on a strengthened rule of law and on democracy and human rights. Respect for the rule of law is of major importance to Mali's Third Republic, which makes the promotion and defence of human rights one of its priorities.

In this connection I should also note the institutionalization, which has now been going on for two years, of the Space for Democratic Discourse, which enables individuals, civil society and political parties to make direct and public appeals to the Government on 10 December every year with regard to the respect of human rights in Mali. We likewise have institutionalized a children's parliament, which provides a forum for the free expression of Mali's children to assist the public authorities in implementing the national plan of action for the survival, development and protection of children.

Mali — one of the six countries that initiated the World Summit for Children in 1990 — welcomed the commemorative meeting held on 30 September 1996 to review the progress made and to give thought to the additional steps that need to be taken on behalf of children.

The consolidation of Mali's young democracy requires also the harmonious organization of relations between civilians and the military. With the support of the United Nations, the Government of Mali held a seminar on this subject last July. A code of good conduct is being drafted in this connection.

I should like to underscore here, simply but forcefully, the importance Mali attaches to human rights, in particular the rights of women and children. We are convinced that the role played by our Organization must be backed up by concrete actions that stress the right to education, health and life.

The international economic situation clearly shows that the gap between developed and developing countries is widening. By generating an increase in inequalities and in the risk of social upheavals, this imbalance is making the future of the world increasingly uncertain. Given the situation, the international community must find adequate solutions.

It is imperative that we find an answer to the external debt problem of the countries of the South. In spite of the progress made in this area, relief measures for debt servicing remain insufficient. My delegation therefore makes an urgent appeal that the ongoing discussions at the current meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on the creation of a special fund aimed at considerably reducing the multilateral debt of poor countries under structural adjustment result in a successful outcome.

My delegation deeply appreciates the important extension of $500 million, intended to reduce the debt of African countries, made by the Group of Seven major industrialized countries last June at their summit meeting in Lyons. This is an encouraging sign and an example to follow.

It is just as important to support the efforts of the African countries to diversify their economies and the range of their commodities. It is also necessary to reverse the current trend towards disinvestment and dwindling financial resources destined for Africa.

We should facilitate the access of African products to world markets, particularly by lifting the tariff and non-tariff barriers that affect its finished, semi-finished and manufactured goods. They should also receive preferential treatment, as provided in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round concluded in Marrakesh.

Finally, the international community should give its full support to the Secretary-General's United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa so that it does not suffer the same fate as the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development.

In addition to the critical economic and social situation in Africa, there is the problem of the least developed countries. For this reason, my country appeals to the international community to implement urgently the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Mali also welcomes the proclamation of 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. We hope that the international community will achieve the goals of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

My country hopes that the next World Food Summit, to be held in November in Rome, will make it possible for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to ensuring that poverty-eradication strategies are fully integrated into all United Nations initiatives.

Mali has signed and ratified most international arrangements regarding the environment and therefore welcomes the convening of a special session devoted to a review of the progress made by Agenda 21. Mali intends to continue to work towards the elaboration of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. Mali is therefore pleased at how fast the necessary ratification of 50 Member States was achieved. My delegation is nevertheless concerned about the deadlock on the question of a world mechanism. Mali believes that the mechanism should serve as a data bank and a supplier of the resources necessary to implement national plans to combat desertification.

Our Organization faces new challenges, both in the consolidation of peace and in economic and social development. Its role is constantly growing, and increasing numbers of voices throughout the world appeal to it. In order to meet the challenges of the day, our Organization must have a sound and adequate financial basis. It must also carry out the necessary reforms so that it can be more effective and thus meet the aspirations of peoples for security, justice and development. Accordingly, these reforms must apply to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretariat, but particularly to the specialized and development agencies responsible for elaborating and implementing development programmes.

This is an ambitious challenge, and Africa must contribute significantly to efforts in that direction. The international community must renew its trust in Africa by giving a second term of office to the Head of our Organization, in keeping with past practice.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to draw the attention of all members to document A/INF/51/3, which contains a tentative programme of work and schedule of plenary meetings for the month of October and for the beginning of November.

I should like to point out that this schedule was prepared to facilitate the organization of the work of delegations and to help ensure that the relevant documentation is ready for the discussion of the respective items. The lists of speakers for all the items listed in document A/INF/51/3 are now open.

I will, in due course, announce the dates for the consideration of other agenda items as well as keep the Assembly informed of any additions or changes.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.